1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
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this role of the *cuaird*. An example from another community than Rynamona will throw the type of action it can take into relief.

An "incomplete family" affords the example. It was made up of an old woman and her thirty-year-old son. Theirs was a poor farm, and ordinarily they would have been an object of commiseration. But they were not. In fact, they were a constant annoyance. The son was generally regarded as bad and lazy. He neglected his farm and exhibited an obstinate disregard of village opinion in which his mother abetted him. The result was, naturally, that their house was shunned and he went nowhere to *cuaird*.

But no crisis arose till the episode of the pig. One autumn the son brought home a large Irish white sow. The sow was more nimble than most of her kind, and neither the mother nor the son took any pains to keep her at home. She wandered through the village at will and soon devastated many a cabbage patch. The village took alarm, and the more so that the sow might well prove dangerous to young children. There were angry words among the women, and the men for once backed them up. In the *cuaird* it was hinted that the sow might be found dead one morning. But before such an event could take place, the son took warning and sold the pig. "Public pressure," if you will, forced his decision and resolved the conflict, but it left him as low as ever in the village's esteem.

And lastly, the *cuaird* is the seat of traditional lore and entertainment. Its members are the repositories of folklore and legend. And the official belief of the countryside finds its expression and its reaffirmation in the discussion of events and the recounting of histories and incidents. In communities still at least partly Irish-speaking, such as Luogh, most of its members are *seanachaidhthe*, storytellers in the traditional vein. And it is among them that traditional repertories of a saga, folk tale, song, and legend still get an

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audience. The point of importance here is that it is among the old people that folk myth and folk belief are preserved and expressed for the community.

If we are to examine in full rural behavior based upon age and its connection with the old adult clique whose function in the community we are assessing, we must offer some contrast with the behavior of other age groups.

We have already mentioned that the old men's house in Rynamona was not the only seat of visiting after the day's work, and that the entertainment provided there was merely one instance of many gatherings taking place almost nightly, at least through the winter, in rural communities. In the statements given by older men about the meeting of the young men we have seen something of the manner in which other pursuits than those of the men's house are regarded.

Indeed in all the communities which came under the authors' notice the young men were as ardent evening visitors as were the older men. In Rynamona they were no less so.

There they gathered in most often at the house of Roche, the "prosecutor." They did this from long habit, as did their elders. But they had no larger justification for their doing so. They went because "you never feel the time passing when you're in with the boys." But there were marked differences in their meeting. There was no central clique so closely integrated as that in O'Donoghue's house. There were pairs of lads, brothers, friends, and groups of three and four and five who habitually played cards or walked the roads together.

A greater difference lay in their complete lack of concern with the affairs of the community. One could get them to talk only about their own plans or the trials of their own kind and age. There was no debate, no reaching of decisions, no appeal to tradition. The skills upon which those taking part in the meetings prided themselves and for which

8:Arensberg E-5 (1932-1934) 1937
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pologist avoids all explanations except those which arise out of his observations of what men do, and if he accepts them only when he can test them again against observed behaviour, he will be, if only imperfectly, in the main line of scientific development.

Before one makes a frontal attack, it is good tactics to survey one's ground. One likes to know what interest it holds in store.

Ireland, particularly Celtic southern Ireland, has always had a fascination for most of us. The cities, particularly Dublin, the last stronghold of the art of conversation, are as charming as the countryside. But it is the country districts which occupy us here.

Most of us probably know at least four countrysides in Ireland. Like Caesar we divide our Gaul. But the divisions we make are not geographical. Our four Irelands are lands of the spirit.

Perhaps our first Ireland is the mystic land of the past. This is the land of the 'Celtic twilight', the country of Synge and Yeats and Stephens. It is the seat of an age-old tradition, of the remains of a once brilliant Celtic civilization. Literature has taught us to look for this land in the barren moors and rugged mountains of the west, among the tiny white cabins of Connemara and along the misty headlands of Kerry and West Cork. It is the Ireland

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of Aran and the Blaskets. There a remnant of the sagas and hero-tales can still be heard, a wandering poet sang but yesterday in the lilt of Blind Raferty. There old men and old women sitting by turf fires still spin tales of banshees and the good people; and just the other day in Daniel Corkery's hidden Munster the hedge school-master and the wandering scholar had Ovid and Horace at his tongue's tip. And there too the riders to the sea go down to their deaths amid the keening women, whose language rings to us of simple, old-world poetry long ago passed from our own tongues.

A second Ireland is a gay, full-blooded picture, though some among the nationalists dislike it. It is the Ireland of the merry and happy-go-lucky present. Handled badly, it becomes the land of the 'stage-Irishman', that buffoonish figure which the nation's pride so justly resents. But handled well, by a Lady Gregory, a George Birmingham, and on the stage by the Abbey Players, it is a world of its own. In it, innocent boasting, the excitement of a race-meeting, the hurly-burly of a fair, the flashing wit of a court-room, and the staccato thunder of a political campaign, reveal a talkative, mercurial, witty people, amusing and intelligent, romantic and gallant.

The third Ireland most of us know is a more serious scene. One might even call it a grimmer land. It is a sober, hard-working land of minute towns and small farms upon a soil not always

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from the narrow valley lands at Doolin in the extreme north-west of County Clare. I was on my way to my first stay in an Irish west-country farm community. My road, no wider than a bridle-path, led up a sharp escarpment out of the tiny valley which empties its stony river into the Atlantic, not three miles away from the southernmost island of Aran. Once the top of the rim is reached the mountainside flattens out into a green and gently sloping table-land. Standing there one can see the whaleback rocks that are the Aran Islands and the masses of Mount Elva on the southern shore of Galway Bay. Far beyond in Connemara, one can catch the glint of the Twelve Pins, if the day is 'hard' and sunny. Off to the left, the table-land breaks off abruptly three hundred feet downward into the Atlantic, for the famed Cliffs of Moher are here, reminders of an Irish mountain that the sea has shorn off clean.

The community toward which I was making my way lies along the table-land between mountain-top of bracken and black bog and the cliffs. It keeps up the old tradition. It calls itself Luogh, and its language, at least that of the old people, is Irish, but the young people are forgetting the old tongue. English is the more common speech today, even here. Yet Mr. Delargy, the editor of the *Irish Folklore Journal*, has collected a large number of stories, songs and traditional tales and sayings here, some of them going back to the saga cycles.

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them to think I wasn't with them", he put it. No wonder, then, that the political allegiances of whole countrysides are constant factors in Irish politics.

The community reaches agreement upon its internal affairs, too, through the old men's discussions. It is in just this type of activity that one can at last put one's finger upon that nebulous force among men: public opinion. That force is not implemented; it is merely the power of gossip and censure; only in critical days, as in the time of land agitation, can it rise to action, as a last resort, and win itself an international name: the boycott. But it is none the less powerful.

But, in rural Ireland, the group through which this power flows serves another function which cannot be disassociated from its role as the seat of public opinion. The members of the old men's *cuaird* are the living repositories of tradition. In communities, such as Luogh, where the Irish language lingers on, many of them are *seanachaidhthe* or story-tellers. Among them the ancient repertories of legend, saga and folk-tale still find an audience. That the exponents of fairy-lore have always been, and are still, old men and old women, is no social accident. For the pattern of local life retains its continuity and preserves what it can of its conformity with the past through them.

But what of the young men, those who have not attained full status? They do not attend at the old men's house; they take no part in the deliberations

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VI

The Good People

In this last lecture we are finally ready to return to 538 ● 'old custom'. Folklore is part of the social order 182 which we have been sketching out. Folk-custom and folk-belief, even though 'survivals' of an ancient day, have an important role in the life of the countryman. Something of that role I have already tried to show you. Ancient belief surrounded and reinforced the conventional division of labour. It gave point and interest to the necessary changes of social and family life. It helped provide sanctions and formulae of agreement in which the local community could pursue and regulate its unconscious organization of human lives. It cropped up again in the synthesis between the life of the town and that of the countryside.

What is it then that gives old custom and belief this power? What does it contain within itself that allows it to persist and outlive the centuries? The anthropologist Marrett said once: "Survivals are no mere wreckage of the past, but are likewise symptomatic of those tendencies of our common nature which have the best chance of surviving in the long run".

8:Arensberg E-5 (1932-1934) 1937
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182 The anthropologist must take note of such
538 'tendencies' in folklore. Consequently, rather than devote time to a description of folk-belief as it still exists, I prefer to attack such questions. In attacking them, I hope to proceed as we have done before. I shall try to treat folklore as it occurs in the life of the countryman and find the answers to our queries there.

538 In so doing, I must give warning that I must leave aside a good deal of the most picturesque elements of Irish folklore. Remnants of hero-tales, fragments of the sagas of Oisín and Fionn MacCumhaill and the Fianna are still to be heard sometimes upon the lips of the old people. A popular history, half-legend, commemorates patriots and the enemies they fought, and weaves itself round the monuments of the past which crowd the Irish landscape. Norman barons, Celtic chieftains, noble lines both native and alien throng the unwritten pages of this history and elbow for room with saints and martyrs, Cromwellian soldiers, moonlighters and 'ripparees', minstrel poets and hedge-schoolmasters of learning. A great many religious legends, in fact a whole popular hagiology, still survive, infusing local piety with romantic glamour. International tales, like those Grimm recorded first in Germany, traceable from India and Siberia to the remotest Irish coasts, can still be heard, regarbed in a traditional Gaelic dress. But all these are a popular literature, unwritten perhaps, but

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none the less evolved in response to canons of literary expression. They have been dealt with by more competent commentators than I. 538

I must give warning, too, that I am not equipped to give you the usual collector's report. I can give little account of the marvellous fauna and flora that filled the Irish countryside till recently. Better collectors than I have done ample justice to many a headless black dog that haunts a road in country districts and to many a *péist* or *broc-shidhe* that dwells in lake and cave. Nor can I regale you with the marvellous or fearsome deeds of 'weasels', 'hares' and 'worms' that clothe a fairy power in animal form. Likewise the whole great field of charms and nostrums, magic cures, lucky and unlucky deeds and days and things, is a world of detail into which I cannot lead you very far, except in furtherance of the purpose of this discussion.

For in attempting to relate folklore to social life, interest lies not so much in the minutiae of particular folk-belief as in the part the scheme of thought they make up plays in customary conduct. The problem is not so much just what is believed, but the effect of and the reason for such belief.

In such a discussion, some preliminary definition of the folklore we deal with is necessary. The usual definition is very loose: the unrecorded traditions of the people as they appear in popular fiction, custom and belief, magic and ritual. I prefer rather to narrow the field down, and to leave aside the

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538 historical question involved. But even then, we are left with a very broad field of inquiry. All the acts and rituals associated with belief in supernatural powers not directly recognized and regulated by the official doctrine of the Church remain for us to examine.

776 538 The chief of these powers is usually called the 'fairies'. The country-people have many other names for them which they prefer. But, most often, they feel no need of distinguishing them by particular names. They call them simply 'them'. In the pronoun they summarize both their nameless power and their immanence. No greater specification is necessary where such powers crowd so closely in upon one's life. The acts and rituals which spring out of this belief are similarly broad in scope. They range from minor doings and turns of speech of daily life to the most hidden practices of rare and deadly black magic.

Perhaps the native name gives the best definition. The whole fairy-cult is under attack these days. The forces of Church and school are pitted against it. It is nothing more than 'pisherogues', the countryman will tell you. The word is usually translated as 'superstition', but the English word contains too great a bias for us to use it. The 'pisherogues' are much more than ignorant superstitions. In the light of an acquaintance with the practices of the world's peoples, they are easily understandable in much broader terms. They form

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a symbolic order overlying the values of social life and clothing them in emotional terms in much the same way as do unofficial dogmas and unofficial, non-logical cosmologies among all peoples, not excepting those of our own urban civilization of today. In that, they respond to recognizable sociological and psychological necessities. In its own way, Yankee New England is as fertile of such non-logical beliefs as is rural Ireland. Rural Ireland is different only in that she has preserved an older and more ancient terminology in which to build her particular symbolism. She has her own genius in the matter which expresses the age-long continuities of her culture.

I think you will perhaps understand me better if I go on to sketch out the symbolism which the 'pisherogues' contain.

First, one must notice that the Irish countryman is a very devout man. His life is ordered in his adherence to his religion. Much of his habit of mind and his view of the world responds to his Faith. He is a devout and practising Catholic. But he is also devout in another direction too, very often. Just as there is room in his mind and heart for patriotic fervour along with religious zeal, so is there room for fairy belief. Sometimes, of course, these devotions may conflict; but ordinarily they need not. They can intermesh and support one another.

Thus in his daily life, one finds the countryman

10: Browne D-5 (1893) 1894
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Inishbofin

on this subject, I shall not attempt the treatment of it myself, but shall quote the opinion of the Rev. Eugene O'Growney, who has an exceptional knowledge of both people and language, and has kindly furnished me with some of his notes relating to them. He says:— "The Irish spoken in Boffin has a very poor vocabulary, as far as I heard it spoken. I must say, however, that it was not easy to get the people to speak it, and many children at first refused point blank to utter a word of Irish. In most of the Irish-speaking districts of the west, the people have preserved a number of old poetic prayers and hymns. Many of these are very beautiful, and some appear to be of great age. I was particularly interested at the time of my visit in these hymns, but was told that the only hymn in use in Boffin and Shark was the *ortha Mhuire*, or prayer of Mary. I could not find any person in Boffin who could recite it, and the only person in Shark who was supposed to have it in full was out at sea. An old man in Boffin recited for me a portion of a quaint old religious composition in English." In another place he states that the people speak neither English nor Irish well, their dialect of the language containing many corrupted English words, and at least one curious word. "I recollect that the cove in which St. Leo's well is situated is called *fuath Leo*. I take the word *fuath*, which is the usual word in Inishshark and Inisboffin for a 'cove,' to be a corruption of *uamh*, which is used by the Four Masters in the year 893 as meaning 'cave.'"[1]

IV. SOCIOLOGY.

1. *Occupations.*—Every family combines fishing and farming, and has some share in a boat. The farms are small (see p. 340), about three acres and a-half under potatoes and oats, being about the average amount of tillage per family. All are held direct from the landlord, who resides on Inishbofin, there being no subletting or con-acre. The rents average about £2 per holding, but vary much according to the extent and quality of the land.

The holdings are not divided up into small fields, as in Aran, but are often insufficiently fenced, allowing the cattle to stray, which

[1] The Rev. E. A. Lavelle has, since the above was written, sent a translation of a curious old Irish litany used on both islands, both in Irish and English, which he obtained from an old man, aged 84, whose father, Peter Lavelle, fought under Nelson at Trafalgar. As the litany is in English and of great length, it is not inserted here, but it is to be hoped that the Irish form will be recorded and preserved as it may possess the linguistic value wanting in a translation.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

feet in diameter. (Small, carefully made clews of hay rope, with a centre of rags or corks, are occasionally used as footballs; similar coils of rope in England seem to be oval in shape and would serve rather as balls for Rugby football.) Laying by a stock of clews was a useful occupation for a wet day. The man of the house chose the sedentary end of the rope, sitting under cover in the barn among the thrashed straw and feeding it evenly into the rope as the other end was twisted by a retreating youth armed with a thraw-hook. As the rope grew, the boy had to withdraw into the rain away from the shelter and the sociability of the barn, and this simple scene is the theme of one of Douglas Hyde's Irish plays, *Casadh an tSugáin* (The Twisting of the Rope). A rival suitor makes love to a girl in the barn while the unfortunate twister is forced by his unco-operative employer to watch the proceedings from the end of a lengthening and apparently endless rope.

Hay ropes are both softer and stronger than straw and were used, for example, for parts of the harness where straw ropes would have chafed and broken. They were naturally employed for securing large cocks of hay (tramp cocks, Fig. 52) against the wind; and tethers for young animals were often made of hay rope. A Donegal landlord writing of the early nineteenth century tells of cabbages tethered against the wind with three hay ropes.[1] The shearing rope, four or five feet long, by which the legs of sheep were tied together when clipping the wool, was also made of hay or marram grass. Here we may take note of the curious practice of piecemeal shearing, recorded from Mayo[2] and Donegal[3] and possibly to be attributed to ancient usage rather than to indolence. It seems that the women were in the habit of clipping bits off the sheep at any season, as they needed the wool. Stronger than ropes of straw or hay are those made of rushes or sedges, and stronger still those of fir, heather, birch twigs, willow bark, horsehair or rawhide. Bog fir ropes were still being twisted in north Antrim, a few years ago, for securing thatch and making bed-frames. Ropes were made even from seaweed, as we shall see in the following chapter. Many

[1] J. Hamilton, *Sixty Years Experience*, 19.
[2] C. R. Browne, *Garumna and Letternullen*.
[3] Lord George Hill, *Gweedore*, 24.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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you some borrowed article made of steel, an old shoe should be thrown after you, and special charms recited. A knot should be tied in the tail of a horse which is to be sold. If a tinker takes a fancy to your horse you will be wise to sell, for 'he will take the good out of it whether or no'. And if you buy an animal you should put a handful of earth on its back to ensure that you have also purchased 'the luck of the beast'. It was at the fair that a man proved his adult status by his ability to hold his own at buying and selling, and a favourite theme of the stories which raise a ready laugh at the fireside concerns the simpleton who exchanged his cow for a worthless trifle.

The old countryman is not ashamed to try out, often with success, his age-old bargaining methods when making purchases of standard-priced goods at a shop. For the shop has taken over some of the traditions of the larger less personal world of the fair. Not only is a certain amount of haggling expected—and enjoyed on both sides of the counter—but there is a communal interest in the outcome. Thus it is held that you should never be alone when making a purchase. And there is an old belief that money earned in a particular way should be spent on some special purchase, for example there should be some 'egg money'—normally the woman's earnings—in the cash set aside to buy a horse in spring. Reference has already been made to the tradition that if you sell a hide you should buy something made of metal with the money. In parts of the country there were certain things which it was thought should never be sold though they might be given away—a kid for example. And in Mayo milk might be given away but would be sold only in secret, and it used to be an indelible disgrace for a woman to sell butter: it was regarded as a sign of abject poverty.[1]

It is perhaps because of the anonymity which the bustle of the fair confers on the buyer that certain classes of goods tend to be purchased there rather than at a shop. One of the remarkable features of an Irish fair is the quantities of old clothes and boots on display, and I am told that there is a considerable export of second-hand clothes from Scotland to the country fairs of Northern Ireland. Sir Walter Scott commented on this

[1] P. Knight, *Erris in the Irish Highlands*, 77; C. R. Browne, *Ballycroy*.

14: Westropp B-4, 5 (no date)1910-12
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as their war-goddess,[21] so, before the baptism of King Cairthinn, (first Christian Prince of his House, about A.D. 430), the ancestors of the Dalcassians may have worshipped Aibhinn on her holy hill, and her equally lovely sister Aine, crowned with meadowsweet, on the tamer mound of Knockaney. Whether, if so, they found her already enthroned at Craglea on their conquest of the district, or whether the conqueror Lugad consecrated the mountains to his patroness, it is now impossible to guess. Aibhill, as banshee, held her own. We find her even usurping the place of the "Sybil" in a translation of the *Dies Iræ*,[22] in unwonted companionship with King David, and she was a commonplace of local threnodies during the eighteenth, and even the nineteenth, century. In the lake below Rathblamaic in Inchiquin she has down to recent years been seen, with the twenty-five other banshees of Clare that call her their queen, washing clothes before any impending disaster.[1]

The next appearance of a banshee in local history is of a very different spirit three centuries later. The *Cathreim Thoirdhealbhaigh* ("Triumphs of Torlough") was written probably about A.D. 1350 by Seean mac Craith, the hereditary historian.[22] It contains accounts of three spirit women,—one, the "Sovereignty of Erin," being of surpassing loveliness, and the two others, (if not the same,—"Dismal" and "Water Dismal"), of loathsome hideousness. The hags, however, probably survive, while the "Sovereignty" has perished. Bronach ("the sorrowful or dismal one") of Ceann Boirne was known as the "Hag of Black Head" from the modern name of the older Ceann (or Rinn) of Burren. She was in full repute in 1839, and I have heard of her vaguely about 1885 or 1887. In August, 1317, she

[21] Cf. *Revue Archéologique*, N.S., vol. xviii. (1868), p. 1; Sir Samuel Ferguson's paper, from the Irish point of view, in *Dublin University Magazine*, Oct. 1834, p. 463; W. M. Hennessy, "The War Goddess of the Ancient Irish," *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, vol. x., p. 425.

[22] Mss., Royal Irish Academy, 23.M.47.

[1] As yet only in manuscript,—one copy of A.D. 1509, and another probably from one of 1449. For its age see *Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy*, vol. xxxii., p. 139.

14: Westropp B-4, 5 (no date)1910-12
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washing armour and rich robes till the red gore churned and splashed through her hands.[35] Calling an Irish ally to question her, De Clare heard that "the armour and clothes were of the English, and few would escape immolation." "I am the Water Doleful One. I lodge in the green fairy mounds (*siáh*) of the land, but I am of the Tribes of Hell. Thither I invite you. Soon we shall be dwellers in one country." Next day De Clare, his son, and nearly all his English troops lay dead upon the fields near the ford of Dysert for miles over the country in their flight.

The belief of the early eleventh and fourteenth centuries is still extant, for local legend near Dysert tells how Aibhill and twenty-five banshees washed blood-stained clothes in Rath Lake before "Claraghmore" (De Clare) fell, and that they still do so when mischief is afoot.[36]

For nearly 300 years there is no other Clare banshee tale, till the famous one of 1642 in the *Memoires of Lady Fanshawe*, (published in 1665).[37] It is so well known that a brief abstract will suffice. Her Ladyship, staying with some of the O'Briens, was sleeping in a room, of which the window overhung water at some height, at a castle, perhaps Bunratty or Castle Lake. She was awakened by a horrible scream, and saw a girl outside the window. The apparition was pale, rather handsome, and with her reddish hair hanging dishevelled over her shoulders. After some time the unwelcome visitor vanished, with other ghastly shrieks. In the morning Lady Fanshawe, telling her tale, was told of the death of a relative of the family whose illness had been concealed from her. The spirit was that of the peasant wife of a former owner of the castle, drowned in the moat by her husband and of evil omen to his descendants.

The next story was told in my own family and, I understand, in that of the Ross Lewins. I have traced it to a daughter of Jane Ross Lewin, one of the girls who saw the banshee. It related to Jane's father, Harrison Ross Lewin of Fortfergus, who probably died in 1776, as his will, dated November, 1775, was proved in

[35] Another "washer of the ford" appears in "Da Choca's Hostel," *Revue Celtique*, vol. xxi. (1900), p. 157, and she is also a Bodbh.

[36] Told me by Prof. Brian O'Looney in 1890, and I have heard more recently of the existence of the belief.

[37] *Loc. cit.*, pp. 83-6.

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763 of Fortanne says that the coach was heard at the deaths of certain Westropps after 1873, but nothing happened after its last appearance.

The phantom of a coach and horse was seen not far from Corofin, at Cragmoher, not long since, but it is agreed that no death took place after the apparition. An equally vague story was told about 1870 at Attyflin by a very old woman, Norry Halloran, whom the sound of the coach pursued one dark evening for a long way, but it did not pass her door, and nothing happened afterwards.

IV. *Fairies and Fairy Forts and Mounds.*

776 823 [538] MacCraith, in the *Triumphs of Torlough*, in describing the prognostics of the death of Prince Donchad early in the fourteenth century says that "lights shone on the fairy forts," and it has already been noted that the *sidhs* or fairy mounds were lodgings of appalling apparitions, like Bronach when not at her proper residence in the lower deep. The *Dindsenchas*,—that early encyclopædia invaluable for everything but the reliable account of the origin of place names which it purports to be,—describes how a lady dwelling in such a mound sprang out at her would-be lover in the form of a dragon.[36] Probably such beliefs, and the consequent fear of irate and deadly beings in earthworks, have helped until recent years to preserve the residential earthen "forts," although the ring walls were destroyed with but little scruple. Nevertheless the son of a farmer named Nihill told me in 1892 that, after some days wreckage and removal of the outer wall of the fine triple stone fort of Cahercalla, near Quin, his father was stricken with acute pain, and only recovered from his illness when the work was stopped,—whence this interesting ruin has been preserved to the present day. A certain landlord, still living, nearly lost the use of one eye from the dust of an explosion when blasting a rock in an earth fort which was being removed, and this incident has upheld the faith and fear of the fairies in north-eastern Clare. A locally famous "astronomer" and weather prophet tried, many years ago, to blast a dolmen in Inchiquin Barony, and a splinter hit his hand, which was badly injured and

[36] *Revue Celtique*, vol. xv., p. 441.

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by "the stroke of a fairy," the poet recommends the holy man to get the aid of a local practitioner of renown, Peter the Fairy Killer.[43] 776 823

In recent years I have met only one sign of true respect for the "Sheevra" race. A small patch of land was left untilled in the midst of a cornfield at the end of the steep descent from Carran old church to Eanty in the Burren. It was left for three years amidst the tillage, and then the field was allowed to return to grass. The owners obviously disliked to explain the matter, but the act was clearly understood in the neighbourhood as a concession to the spirits of the field when the grass land was broken up for the first time in human memory.[44]

The appearances of the fairies also seem now very rare indeed. At Newmarket-on-Fergus, a centre of much folklore, we find that, besides the two forts named above and a low earth mound (perhaps sepulchral), only one spot has been honoured by an actual apparition in the last ten years. In this case a man walking on the Ennis road, not far from Lough Gaish, saw a very little man neatly dressed in green and walking on the path. Suspecting the green man to be a *leprechaun*,—and hence an owner of gold,—the Clare man tried to grasp him, but the sprite vanished out of his hands.[45]

The "literary movement" will probably affect the folklore very soon, as it is already affecting historical tradition,—which is shown by the variations in certain legends collected at long intervals at the same sites. By some the Danann have been identified with the Danes as "fort builders." If this were so, why did Dane's fort become Caher Loghlanach, (Caher Loglin, 1652), and similar forms? The people once knew better, for forts were attributed to all sorts of times and races, not only to members of the Tuatha Dé Danann, but also to Firbolgs and mythical persons such as Aenghus, Eerish, Eir, Farvagh, and 776 538

[43] *Ibid.* 23. K. 10.

[44] It was certainly not the darker belief that in Scotland dedicated an offering to the one called euphemistically "The Goodman," nor like the sheaf sometimes dedicated to Brigit and other saints in West Munster, or, indeed, in other parts of Ireland.

[45] Collected by Miss Katherine Neville. The sprite was, of course, proved not to be a *leprechaun*, as that being can be held by the eye alone.

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776 Croaghan, and Celts such as Lachtna (A.D. 820-840), and Brian
● 538 Boru (A.D. 980-1014). In one notable instance, King Conor (A.D. 1242-69) is the reputed builder of the great stone fort of Dun Conor in Aran, which in the eleventh-century legend is evidently connected with Conchiurn or Conchraed the Firbolg,—a relation accepted in 1685 by Roderic O'Flaherty, although he called its hero "Conquevar" (*i.e.* Chonchobhar or Conor). Any modern allusion to the Danann is therefore "suspect." Many visits to the recesses of the hills in Burren from 1878 onwards,—and I may add that
776 the same is true of the rest of Clare,—only gave me, in 1905, one
788 direct reference to the Danann.* At the natural moat crowned
823 by the small stone ring wall of Croaghateeaun, near Lisdoonvarna, we were told to cross ourselves as a protection against the Danann. The place was, nevertheless, undoubtedly regarded by the older people living near it as a most dangerous fairy fort, and we were told how certain badger hunters,—(who brought drink with them), —after a long festival on its summit got benighted there; they eventually returned home sobered by fright, as they suddenly "saw the whole fleet" of "them" coming up the mound, and escaped only just in time.

776 The "whirlwinds" along dusty roads and sudden gusts were
788 not long ago everywhere supposed to be caused by the progress of
821 fairy beings. The older folk believed, and trembled,—crossing themselves, or saying a word of prayer,—while the younger folk, more than half in jest, raised their hats, as is still sometimes done to the unlucky "single magpie" and the weasel.

776 I know of two cases of reputed changelings. My second sister, whose delicacy, when an infant, excited remark, was, about 1842, taken out by a servant to be exposed on a shovel on the doorstep at Carnelly. The angry and hasty intervention of another servant saved the child, but the would-be "exposer" was convinced of the propriety of her attempt "to get back the real child" from the fairies. A very old woman, Kate (Geerin) Molony, a henwife at Maryfort, near Tulla, whom I faintly remember in 1869, was many years before anxious about her little daughter's failing health, and went to a "wise woman," who assured her that the child was "changed." She spoke of this on her return, and unfortunately

* Apart from Lon, at Slievnaglasha, and the "hags."

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A Folklore Survey of County Clare (*continued*).

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In a preceding article I have dealt with place names and legends of names, banshees, the death coach, and fairies, and in the present one I propose to deal mainly with other appearances of a spectral or spiritual character. In doing this it is necessary carefully to avoid attributing to older writers beliefs which they never held. It is more than probable that the writer of the *Wars of the Gaedhil with the Gaill*, and Seean MacCraith, the author of the *Triumphs of Torlough*, were no more under a delusion when they personified the spirits of Valour, Bloodshed, Terror, and Sovereignty than the modern journalist who writes of "Public Opinion sitting in judgment," or the "Spirit of Loyalty attending King George." The first ancient writer, describing the terrors of the deadly combat of the Irish and the Norse in 1014, tells us that there was "a bird of valour and championship fluttering over Murchad's head and flying on his breath." He also tells how there flew a dark, merciless, (and many more adjective-endowed) *bodbh*, screaming and fluttering over the combatants, while "the satyrs (*bannanaig*), the idiots, the maniacs of the glens, the witches, the goblins, the ancient birds, the destroying demons of the air and sky, and the feeble demonic phantom host" arose to accompany the warriors in the combat. He probably meant little more than "Amazement in the van and Flight combined with Sorrow's faded form and Solitude behind," though possibly the various uncanny "creatures of the wild" were real to him in their proper places in the hills and glens, but not in daylight on the fields beside Dublin. The second writer (*circa*

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1350) describes King Torlough, about 1286, returning from a successful raid, which has left its mark very clearly on the legal rolls of the day, ravaging the English lands round the mountains of eastern County Limerick and northern Tipperary, and marching up the western (Clare) shore of Lough Derg. A lovely maiden appeared, "modest, strange in aspect, glorious in form, rosy-lipped, soft-taper-handed, pliant-wavy-haired, white-bosomed." She was the "Sovereignty of Erin" come to rebuke the chief for letting De Burgh dissuade him from attempting the reconquest of all Ireland, and vanished in a lustrous cloud. The author's intent here is unmistakable. MacCraith has one other passage, so suggestive and remarkable that it can only be regarded as a literal statement of the beliefs of the warriors at the burial of some of whom his father, Ruadri, presided, a few years later, in 1317. Donchad, a prince of the Clan Torlough line, aided by William de Burgh, gave his deadly enemy, Richard de Clare, a severe defeat near Bunratty in 1311. At the moment of victory De Burgh was captured by the foe, and the victors fled in indescribable confusion,—the English to their nearest castles, and the Irish to their stone strongholds, the great terraced mountains of Burren. De Clare and his protegé, Prince Dermot, camped on two ridges at Cruchwill and Tullycommaun, a long ridge capped with tumuli, dolmens, and "forts." Donchad lay across the valley and lake on the spurs of Slieve Carran opposite. The soldiers of Donchad, we are told, "were disturbed by phantoms and delusive dreams, lights shone on the fairy forts," the waves of Erin[1] groaned, "the deep plaint resounded from the woods and streams," shades were seen, and hollow groans were heard. This is evidently a true tale of the reminiscences of the depressed and anxious men who lay looking at the foes' camp fires opposite. I have often heard with wonder on these lonely hills

> "undescribed sounds
> That come a swooning over hollow grounds
> And wither drearily on barren moors,"

the noise of the winds in the rocks and bushes, the strange prattle of streams in crannies deep down in the rocks, the cry of night

[1] Misfortune was foretold by great waves at four spots on the Irish coast, to which later belief added a fifth at Malhay in Clare.

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XVII. *Religious Objects and their Legends.*

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538 Clare was once rich in religious objects, and some important ones have survived until our times, such as the Bell Shrine of St. Senan, the croziers of St. Blathmac of Rath and St. Tola of Dysert O'Dea, and the bells of Rath, Burren, and Kilshanny,—all, except the last, in the collection of the Royal Irish Academy in Dublin, besides the reputed bell of Iniscatha.[14] St. Colman MacDuach and St. Lachtin were also closely connected with the county, and the crozier of the first and shrine of the arm of the second are preserved in the Irish collection. We read in early records how the Norse, in their destruction of the monastery of Iniscaltra in 922, "drowned its relics and shrines" in Lough Derg. The early *Life of St. Senan* tells how his bell descended ringing from heaven, and the place where this is reputed to have happened is still shown at Cross, between Kildimo and Farighy. The richly-enshrined crozier of St. Flannan of Killaloe (c. 680), and the bell brought from Rome by St. MacCreehy (c. 620), were extant when their *Lives* were written in the middle of the twelfth century. Early in the seventh century "the relics of Columb, son of Crimthann, were brought in a wain" to Caimin of Iniscaltra.[15] There were a number of relics and a bell "gold-enshrined" at Tulla in 1318.[16] Recent legend tells of the bells of the round towers of Dromcliff and Kilnaboy being hidden in the pool of Poulaclug and the marsh below the latter monastery, and of a silver bell of Kilmoon or Killeany, in the Burren, hidden in the stream named from it Owennaclugga. A brass bell found in the round tower of Dysert was sold in Limerick about 1837. The Black Bell of the MacNamaras was probably one of the relics at Tulla, and may be the one attributed to St. Mochulla in 1141. The "Black Book" of that saint was probably a register, and existed down to 1627, when it was used (and disappeared) in a lawsuit

[14] It was exhibited in Dublin in 1853 by a Mr. John Cooke, and sold to the British Museum. There is no local tradition attached to it.

[15] *Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy*, "Calendar of Oengus," (early ninth century, ed. Whitley Stokes), under Dec. 13, p. 182; also published by Henry Bradshaw Society.

[16] *Cathreim Thoirdhealbhaigh*:—"Tullach nan espoc sanctified by bell and precious mass, by relic, gold-enshrined, by rare piety and notable miracles."

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of the Delahoydes. The shrine of St. Lachtin's arm,[17] made for Cormac MacCarthy, king of Munster between 1118-27, was preserved in his church at Kilnamona, and about 1640 removed to Lislachtin Abbey in Kerry; no folklore seems attached to it. The crozier of St. Blawfugh, *i.e.* Blathmac, son of Onchu, was preserved at Rath, near Corofin, and then in a hole in the wall of the old chapel of Corofin, where it was used for very solemn swearing and was much feared. The crozier of St. Manaula (Bán Thola) of Dysert was purchased from an old woman, daughter of an O'Quin, its last hereditary keeper, and was held in great reverence for cures and as an object upon which oaths were taken. The most important of all these relics is the Clog-an-oir, or "golden bell,"[18] the empty bell shrine preserved by the Keanes of Beechpark, one of whom had married the daughter of one of the Keanes or O'Cahans the "coarbs" (*comharba*) or successors of St. Senan. It consists of a bronze cover of the twelfth century, adorned by later silver plates, and violation of an oath taken on this shrine twisted the perjurer's face or resulted in convulsions and death. It is told that a gentleman living in County Galway sent his servant to borrow the "bell" to test his servants about a theft. His messenger happened to be the thief, and on the way home again threw the dreaded object into the sea. He then boldly told his master that the Keanes would not lend it. "You are a liar," was the reply, "for there it is on the table before you." The man fell on his knees, and confessed. It was last asked for in 1834, when a farmer had been robbed of twenty pounds, and borrowed the "bell" to swear the neighbours after Mass. On the Saturday night before the ordeal his family was awakened by a crash, as something was thrown in through the window. This proved to be the missing notes, tied with the original string. There are many similar stories, and the Clog-an-oir is said to have been stolen, but to have always returned to its rightful owners.[19]

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[17] An illustration of this was published by Vallancey in 1770. See Mr. Geo. Coffey's *Guide to the Christian Antiquities in the Collection of the Royal Irish Academy*, pp. 53-4, 60-2, and for the croziers of Dysert and Rath and bell of Rath, *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, vol. xxiv., pp. 337-9.

[18] *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, vol. xxx., pp. 237-44.

[19] Much of this information came from Mr. Marcus Keane of Beechpark, the present possessor, and the remainder from the paper cited in note 18.

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668 revival of a moribund language, and spearheaded by charismatic political, literary,
000 and clerical figures.[3] A nativistic movement is a conscious, organized attempt by the members of a society to revive or perpetuate selected elements of its indigenous culture under conditions of acculturation with dominance. Such a movement provides the members of a society with psychological compensation for the frustrations engendered by cultural subordination; the revived forms come to symbolize the real or imagined freedom, unity, greatness, or happiness enjoyed by the people in precontact times, while the perpetuated elements become symbols of the society's existence as a unique entity, culturally distinct from the superordinate society. As the result of assimilating the values of the alien culture, a subjugated people will come to denigrate certain of their indigenous customs and will refuse to revive or perpetuate them, and sometimes they will exalt "racial" or personality traits assumed to be characteristic of their ancestors.

668 Although earlier influenced by Fenianism and the Gaelic Athletic Associa-
197 tion, the nativistic movement in Ireland gained its full momentum with the
• 538 formation of the Gaelic League in 1893 and shows few signs of waning today, more than four decades after the achievement of independence. The objectives of the league are to preserve the Irish language and extend its use as the vernacular, to further the study of medieval and modern Gaelic literature, and to encourage
[204] the cultivation of a contemporary literature in Irish. Spurred on by the formation of the association with its many local branches, Irish newspapers were established and Gaelic texts published which were read widely; Irish customs were revived, particularly in the esthetic and recreational aspects of culture; and Irish legends and history came to be "glorified."

> The language led inevitably to other things, to Irish music, Irish customs and traditions, Irish place-names, Irish territorial divisions, Irish history; it emphasised the separateness of Ireland as nothing else could; it brought with it national self-respect, a feeling of kinship with the past, the vision of a persistent and continuing tradition going back beyond human memory. The Gaelic League was not alone a re-discovery of the language but a re-discovery of the Nation, a resurrection of the Gael (an unidentified quotation from Inglis 1965:195–196).

177 Whereas the revivalistic emphasis of the nativistic movement has been on
185 language and literature, the perpetuative emphasis has centered on religion. Since
668 the fifth century, Ireland has been a predominantly Catholic country, and from the
[648] time of the Protestant Reformation religion gradually has become part of the warp and woof of the antagonism between the Irish and English. The basic differences in religion came to be fused with other national animosities, mainly political and economic in origin, and Catholicism emerged as one of the significant symbols of Irish uniqueness and superiority in the acculturation process.

648 It is readily apparent that the Irish have been extremely selective in their

[113] [3] The next few pages and Chapter 1 will draw heavily on Irish history. I recommend to those readers not well acquainted with the Irish past two brief histories: Sean O'Faolain's *The Irish: A Character Study* and Brian Inglis' *The Story of Ireland*. The definitive longer works are Edmund Curtis' *A History of Ireland* and J. C. Beckett's *The Making of Modern Ireland 1603–1923*. The final chapter of the O'Faolain volume and Part III of the one by Inglis deal with Irish nativism.

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> Obfuscation is the rule, and while it may seem a little foolish at times, there is no doubt that it makes for a great deal of fun. It cultivates too a sharpness of ear, a feeling for half-tones and shades and subtleties, and a wary alertness that would be worth its weight in gold should one ever be lost in a jungle (Tracy 1953:20–21).

The quotation in some measure applies to interviewing in Inis Beag, where my wife and I took great pains to disentangle real from ideal culture by substantiating interview data with observation wherever possible.

The existence of the conditions depicted by Tracy, as well as the numerous cultural practices shrouded in secrecy, led us to return to the island several times after 1960 before I attempted this book, to emphasize various modes of participant observation, to devise *ad hoc* research methods of an unorthodox nature, to "hone" our orthodox tools and employ cross-checking techniques at every stage of our project, and to cultivate that "sharpness of ear . . . feeling for half-tones and shades and subtleties, and . . . wary alertness" which so distinguishes ethnographic endeavor as an art as well as a systematic epistemology. The use by many folk of "wings of fancy," "honeyed words," and "obfuscations"—popularly known as "blarney"—reflects a long tradition of verbal skill. It is a vital component of Irish and Inis Beag "charm," which often is the product of a delicately poised set of defense mechanisms; beneath it can lie feelings of inferiority and dislike, envy, and jealousy of others. Blarney can serve very effectively to shield genuine thoughts and feelings and thus defend the ego. Irish folklore and literature also reflect this tradition, and it is probably expressed most formidably in James Joyce's *Ulysses* and *Finnegan's Wake* (At least one Irish folklorist has collected "Joycean" utterances from peasants.).

Prestige Status

Inis Beag lacks a class system, and the status symbols which affect human relationships are few. That land and capital—known collectively as "money," "wealth," or "riches"—are the major symbols is revealed in the frequently heard phrase, "If you have money and your health, you're all right." (Health alone is mentioned by those of lesser means.). The men of highest prestige are the king and the 13 who own 24 or more acres of land. But they and their families do not interact more with one another than with others, for, as we have noted, the web of kinship rather than the possession of status attributes largely determines who will interact with whom and in what manner. Nor is their style of life different from that of other islanders, since material possessions and social etiquette are relatively unimportant in the status system. Although the king is a "man of few gardens," his capital, charismatic personality, and "connections" with priests, politicians, and civil servants earn him his high position in the status hierarchy. The prestige which comes with land ownership is based more on the fact of its possession than on the potential wealth that it represents. Men with large holdings can, of course, build more fields and on the increased acreage raise more cattle and sheep and grow more surplus crops for sale, but few take advantage of this oppor-

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especially outside of Ireland. Four islanders have entered orders—two priests and two nuns—and have brought their families not only prestige but an aura of sanctity; it is believed by the folk that God bestows grace on his earthly representatives and on their kin as well. Even the king is thought to receive some measure of supernatural support for the period of time that he spent during his youth, as is rumored, as a servant at Maynooth Seminary.

The folk rank one another according to their ability to row the *curach*, fish, farm, knit, and perform other economic tasks, although such talents do not bring the prestige that they once did. I often have heard individuals chaffed publicly, sometimes even to their faces, for possessing less than average skills, and many persons have told me privately that they admire or envy the skills of others and wish that they themselves were more adept. A man who owns land in the quarter of another village told me that he works painstakingly in setting a garden there, since his efforts will be appraised by the alien villagers and pitilessly condemned if found wanting. Women gain most of their prestige through performing well the tasks ascribed to them by the division of labor. The economic skills of individuals who lived in the past are lauded more than those of contemporary islanders, reflecting the shift of emphasis in the prestige system; this is far more the case with singing, dancing, and storytelling, as well as with the display of strength and courage. Institutionalized storytelling had disappeared from Inis Beag before 1960, although raconteurs of note still hold forth in the pubs and at small social gatherings. These persons, and the several who excel at singing and dancing, are held in high repute. Probably the best liked of the islanders is a man of 72 years who is admired for his wit, charm, friendliness, and agile step dancing. When drinking in the pubs, he enjoys telling anecdotes about his past experiences, singing and dancing, expressing a simulated sadness at his bachelor estate, and poking sly fun at the behavior of certain folk. Although he is landless and thought to be overly lazy, he is ranked high in the prestige hierarchy because of his esthetic talents and occasional *joie de vivre*. His recluse brother of opposite temperament remarked sadly, "Even the stones of the island know him, but no one knows me." Another landless man, now deceased, who was about the same age, enjoyed high status because he was a traditional storyteller, was noted as a young man for his exceptional strength and athletic and rowing prowess, had spent a decade in the United States, and by reading had educated himself well above the level of most of the folk.

Stories abound concerning once famous men of strength and courageous deeds in Inis Beag and the surrounding region. These anecdotes are recounted more during the summer months than the winter ones, when tourists are within earshot and can be suitably impressed. Acts of courage performed by folk in the past mostly deal with mishaps which occurred to crews while fishing or traveling to and from nearby islands or the mainland. The feats of strength performed by former athletes—such as putting the shot, long jumping, and "throwing the half-hundred"—are well within the realm of possibility, but other feats usually are grossly exaggerated. Examples of the latter are the man who, grasping the base of the front leg of a chair in which sat a person weighing 11 stones (154 pounds), lifted it with one hand, and the man who raised over his head "with ease" a struggling opponent of 16 stones (224 pounds) in a pub fight.

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764 178 764 characterized by storytelling, games of various sorts, contests of strength, taunting and mocking, mischief-making, and factional fighting (O Suilleabhain 1967: 26–129). It is hard to imagine a wake more somber than that which takes place in Inis Beag. Most of those who attend it do so before midnight and stay two to three hours, coming and going at will, while "only those who own him stay all night." Each visitor on arrival prays briefly at the bedside of the deceased or in the doorway of the room before expressing condolences, and at midnight all who are anywhere in the wake-house kneel and recite the responses of the Rosary intoned [718] by the curate. Immediate kin express their grief in muffled sobs beside the corpse, but the ancient wailing lament for the dead, known as the "keen," no longer is [273] heard in Inis Beag. Tables and benches are set up in the kitchen on which the [276] men sit silently or converse in whispers with their neighbors, as they drink stout or whiskey and pass around clay pipes offered them "to keep the night awake." [562] Most of the women congregate in the room of the dead, where only very old women smoke pipes. I have counted as many as 18 minutes of absolute silence at a wake and have never heard laughter.

[562] Before the procession to the church forms, men tend to gather in small groups outside the house of the deceased and women gather inside the house. After the corpse is placed in the coffin, close relatives and even friends shake the hand and kiss the face of the dead person before the top is nailed down; then the box is carried to the front street and placed across two chairs for prayers to be said and holy water sprinkled over it by the priest. A white sheet is draped on the casket, and six pallbearers shoulder it and carry it through a gap made in the stone fence to the road which leads to the chapel. The pallbearers are both agnatic and uterine kin of the deceased, excluding his sons, and two of them have the further duty of digging the shallow grave that night or in the morning before the body is interred. Moving slowly behind the coffin bearers, the procession is headed by the spouse and sons of the dead person, followed by his daughters, then women, and finally men in a long, slow moving, silent column; children other than the offspring of the deceased seldom join the procession, and the sexes walk separately. [793] The curate may or may not lead this procession and the one the next morning, sometimes preferring to go ahead to church and cemetery by himself. A son of the dead person treats the grave diggers to stout in a pub before they set out with spades for the graveyard, as he does the pallbearers after they return from the [178] church. In the past, the grave was dug as part of the funeral service, but this custom was altered as the cemetery became filled and occasionally diggers by acci- [538] dent broke into previously interred coffins revealing their contents. A number of grisly legends and anecdotes tell of islanders buried alive by mistake, or whose bodies were partially preserved, as revealed by such accidents.

The procession from the chapel to the graveyard leaves the modern road, as we saw in Chapter 1, to follow an ancient, obliterated trail past a church believed to have been buried beneath the sand centuries ago, and then climbs the long hill of kitchen midden and sand to the gate of the cemetery. Here the column breaks up, some people going to the graves of relatives to pray and others to the newly opened grave. Men and women kneel separately at the graveside for the service (see Fig. 11), and many of the women cry as the casket is lowered into the shallow

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and its fate. In further mocking his fellows for their apprehensions about death and its aftermath, he proclaimed that the soul, "if there is such a thing, goes nowhere after the heart stops beating."

Celtic deities no longer are a part of the belief system of the islanders, but the culture heroes of the Iron Age—such as Cuchulainn, Finn, and Oisin—still are extolled in legends, and the promontory fort and other ancient monuments and some of the geographical features (for instance, glacial boulders) in Inis Beag and nearby islands are explained by the actions of Celtic heroes. Spirits, demons, and witches of many sorts are the supernatural beings from the Celtic, and possibly pre-Celtic, era which figure most importantly in the pagan segment of the folk religion. They have become incorporated into orthodox Catholicism by being declared "works of the Devil" by those who admit to their existence (It is said that two priests of peasant background have admitted to this belief publicly in Inis Beag.)—a reinterpretation resorted to by many primitive and folk peoples under the duress of acculturation with dominance. The spiritual entities most linked with the Irish, both in writings and in popular imagination, are the trooping and solitary fairies, known to the islanders as the "little people," "good people," or "gentry." In Inis Beag, only the leprechaun and "red man" among the numerous solitary fairies are known. William Butler Yeats numbers the banshee, mermaid, pookah, and water horse among the solitary fairies (Yeats ND :76–77), but these are not regarded as such by the folk (The latter two are animal spirits, or demons, rather than human spirits.); also found in Inis Beag are the sea spirit, or "headless body," and other minor spirits and demons.

Fairies seldom permit themselves to be seen, but most of the islanders have experienced their presence, if only through having objects mysteriously misplaced by them or hearing them sing and cobble. These beings differ considerably in appearance—according to type, sex, and age—but most of them are knee-high and wear green jackets, flat red caps, and buckled shoes. The trooping fairies live in *clochán* and thorn bushes and spend most of their time feasting, singing, dancing, fighting, playing games, and making love. A spirited hurling match played by fairies on the strand was described to me by an observer who had witnessed it from a canoe approaching the island; he and his mates rowed close enough to overhear the creatures call out to each other by name. Small whirlwinds are a sign of their passing, and a farmer who was haying and failed to say the proper "God bless them.", as such a wind stirred his field, was punished by having all of the cocks that he had accumulated blown away. One verse of my ballad, poorly received by most islanders, tells of men who were afraid to board the freighter for several nights after trooping fairies had been seen dining in the mess and a ghost pacing the deck. Fairies disregard human beings most of the time, but they can harm those who disregard or speak ill of them, as well as play "fairy pranks" out of sheer capriciousness. One of their favorite modes of attack is to cast "fairy darts" at their victims; on the mainland, these are prehistoric flint artifacts, but in Inis Beag they are any small pebbles supposedly thrown from the sky to cause bodily harm. An Inis Thiar man collected a number of darts allegedly cast at him by irate gentry, only to have the collection confiscated by the curate in whom he indiscreetly confided. The most feared practice of trooping fairies is that of steal-

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November 1st. Imbolc heralded the coming of spring with the lactation of ewes, while at Beltaine cattle were driven to open grazing after passing between bonfires which magically protected them against disease and ensured their fertility. The harvest commenced with Lughnasa, and the grazing season ended with Samhain. Of these festivals, Imbolc has become reinterpreted with the feast of St. Brigid; Beltaine and Samhain, known today as May Day and Allhallows respectively, have remained almost untouched by Christianity and are observed in Inis Beag; but Lughnasa has disappeared from island tradition. Lughnasa still is celebrated in many parts of Ireland and is the subject of a monumental folklore study—Maire MacNeill's *The Festival of Lughnasa*; until the introduction of early potatoes into Inis Beag, harvesting commenced on this day, but any other practices associated with Lughnasa were abandoned long ago. Minor pagan festivals have become reinterpreted with Whitsuntide and the feasts of St. John, St. Martin, and St. Stephen, all of which are observed in Inis Beag.

Brigid, the most renowned of Irish female saints, was a cowherd and therefore is associated with cattle and with flowers, such as the dandelion, which nourish young lambs in the spring. On the last day of January, a small "Brigid's Cross" is fashioned from straw in each household of Inis Beag, and is thrust into the thatching at the end of the feast day. Crosses once were made from rushes, wood, metal, and even paper, and it is possible to determine the age of a thatched cottage being dismantled or renovated by counting the number of crosses salvaged from the straw debris. The Celts worshipped the sun whose symbol was the swastika, and the Brigid's Cross takes this form. It is a charm which protects the house (and the byre on the mainland) and those within it from harm, especially by fire, during the year. At the beginning of this century, a destitute woman who lived alone used to go from door to door begging for food and carrying a large "Brigid's Doll" made of straw and dressed immaculately in white with a picture of the saint on its breast. Some of the folk pulled straw from the doll to manufacture their crosses. After the woman recited the following poem, she was presented with food in honor of the saint, for which she blessed each person in the household with the doll:

Here comes Brigid	She is deaf and
Dressed in white.	She is dumb.
Give her something	For God's sake,
For the night.	Give her some.

Today, small groups of girls travel about the island emulating their predecessor by begging for coins to buy candy and donate to the church. A Brigid's Doll dressed in confirmation garb is carried by the leader of each group, and is used to confer blessings after the girls have recited in unison the two verses.

May Eve and Allhallows' Eve are both times when it is dangerous to go out of doors alone at night or be abroad after midnight, for the "big fellow" roams the back of the island, and everywhere pagan fairies, witches, vindictive ghosts, and the dog of the tumulus search for human victims. The safety of cattle is of particular concern to the folk on May Eve, and a common practice is to attach to the horn or tail of a cow a cloth containing a piece of iron which has

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been blessed, to protect the beast from milk pilfering fairies and hag witches. Among the taboos associated with May Day are those prohibiting the visiting of wells before dawn and giving away fire; as regards the latter taboo, to do so is to "give away the luck of the farm" for a year. Flowers are placed on the altars of the two medieval churches in the early morning of May Day, and at one time garlands of flowers shaped like a horseshoe were hung on door posts for luck. Souls of the dead are especially feared on Allhallows' Eve, and are placated in the Catholic tradition a day later on the feast of All Souls. The telling of stories is tabooed on Allhallows' Day, and the fairies are said to spoil wild blackberries for future eating with their before dawn depredations. My wife and I invited in a small group of islanders to celebrate Halloween in 1959, and we spent much of the evening having our fortunes told by an old man as it was done on this night when he was a youth; he poured melted lead through a key handle into a pan of cold water and made his prognostications by interpreting the configurations formed by the quick hardening metal.

Whitsuntide is the week beginning with the feast of Pentecost, or Whitsunday, but in Inis Beag it extends to the feast of Corpus Christi and is known as the "kinkish time," when once again evil forces hold sway in the island. Usually the weather is "heavy and close" and very changeable, I was told, and people tend to be irritable and more depressed than usual. Men do not cut their hair, nor does anyone wash themselves, during these 12 days. Although the pookah is always a danger, it is more active at this time than during the rest of the year, and children and visitors are warned not to fall asleep outside or even to sit down on the ground unless accompanied by others, whose presence will thwart any attempts by the demon to twist their limbs. Some islanders will not undertake major tasks or decide on important issues during Whitsuntide. Whereas Christmas and Easter are considered "lucky times," the "kinkish time" is unlucky, and those born then may have the evil eye or be destined to die violently or take a life.

In 1960, Corpus Christi was celebrated June 16th—two days after pattern day and eight days before St. John's Eve. The latter is one of several midsummer celebrations reported from Ireland which mark the summer solstice. Boys gather wood and tend a huge bonfire lighted just after sunset on the common land of Inis Beag, and a few islanders carry coals from it to their homes and fields for protection and to guarantee the fertility of their wives and female livestock. A man complained to me that an infection in his son's finger was caused by the failure of the boy to procure a coal from the fire as instructed. On that evening, the folk congregate outside of their cottages and along the terrace roads to watch the hundreds of bonfires alight on the mainland coast. In the past, cows were driven between twin bonfires as at Beltaine, and barren women and those yet to marry leaped over the dying flames. One of the most brilliant satirical novels of Irish life—both cruel and insightful—is Tracy's *The Straight and Narrow Path*, the plot of which focuses on the difficulties encountered by a vacationing British anthropologist after he writes for a newspaper an eye witness account of nuns jumping a St. John's Eve bonfire.

The legends are several and varied in Ireland about the life of St. Martin (O Suilleabhain 1957:252–261). There is no saint of this name who is of Irish

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to procure stout and brandy (ostensibly a general purpose medicine in this case) in disguised containers to be consumed at home. The drinking of the men takes place, for the most part, in the pubs and at parties, and seldom is it indulged in to the extent that the imbibers become physically incapacitated. There were no cases of alcoholism in Inis Beag during 1959, according to the nurse. Although drinking obviously is done to combat depression and boredom, dissolve feelings of shyness and inferiority, alleviate the sense of sin and guilt, and overcome secretiveness which limits extroversion, the folk defend the practice by claiming that it makes them more articulate and convivial and thus better able to sing, dance, converse with one another, and tell stories. The often used phrases "to give us courage" and "great gas" connote just these benefits. In Ireland today, there are nearly half-a-million members of the Pioneer Total Abstinence Society—founded in that country 125 years ago—who have "taken the pledge" not to drink spirits in any form; they wear a small badge shaped like a shield which bears the emblem of the Sacred Heart. Twelve "Pioneers" in Inis Beag have taken a lifetime pledge and about 30 others a two year pledge not to imbibe. Most of these persons are old men, women, and boys. Young and middle-aged men who are members of the society are the objects of a good deal of indirect ridicule and direct jesting.

Folklore

As a result of acculturation, the Inis Beag esthetic tradition today is not nearly so rich as it was two generations ago, nor has it ever been as rich as those found in many other peasant areas of Ireland. The principal esthetic forms are folklore, music, and dance; lacking are the graphic and plastic arts, and of the crafts already considered only the knitting of ganzies, the crocheting of shawls, and *crios* making transcend sheer utility in their manufacture, according to the evaluation of island artisans. Myths, legends, folktales, and anecdotes among prose narratives, and song texts and proverbs, are the predominant genres of oral literature. There is no drama, while poetry, riddles, and jokes seldom are recited.

"Along the western shores of Ireland and Scotland . . . is preserved the oldest vernacular literature in Europe, north and west of the Alps. Along this tattered cultural frontier . . . [are] the last remnants of the most venerable body of orally preserved tradition in western Europe" (Delargy 1957:178). The Inis Beag folk share this body of folklore, and storytelling always has loomed large in the lives of the people. However, it had disappeared formally from the island by the time that my wife and I came, and we were never able to attend a traditional storytelling session, but had to reconstruct its institutionalized characteristics by plumbing the memory of one of the two aged narrators still alive. There are two types of Irish storytellers: the *scéalaí*, who recounts myths and legends of the mythological, Ulster, Fenian, and historical cycles, as well as ancient folktales; and the *seanchaí*, "who makes a specialty of local tales, family-sagas, or genealogies, social-historical tradition, and the like, and can recount many tales of a short realistic type about fairies, ghosts, and other supernatural beings (Delargy 1945:6). In Inis Beag, the former type of storyteller was always male and the latter usually

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male but sometimes female. Also, the former occupied a higher prestige position than the latter, but there was not the clear-cut distinction between genres appropriate to each type of narrator as elsewhere in Ireland; the *seanchai* sometimes related the exploits of Finn and the *scéalaí* the pranks of the red man. The two surviving storytellers in 1960 were both old men, but the *seanchai* died in 1963 and the *scéalaí* two years later. Both had been prolific contributors to Irish Folklore Commission collectors and Continental folklorists.

All of the above kinds of folklore expression, with the exception of folktales, were regarded as true by island folk in the past. The myths either coexisted or were reinterpreted with Biblical stories, and the legends were synchronized with events of ancient world history dating from just before the Flood to the eighth century. The Inis Beag *scéalaí* sometimes was derided by school children for still believing his narratives to be true, as was the *seanchai* for claiming that the supernatural happenings described in his tales actually were experienced by islanders in the past century. Both narrators for many years had been visited only by folklorists and tourists wishing to hear them relate their repertoires of stories, for the only form of storytelling which has been perpetuated is the occasional gathering of men in a home or pub to exchange anecdotes, mostly related to fishing. I was told that in his prime the *scéalaí* could have recited narratives nightly for "at least a month" without ever repeating a story, had he ever been called on to do so. That the memory of the esteemed narrator is prodigious is revealed in the complete collection of all the material recorded from a single *scéalaí* of Co. Kerry, reported by Delargy, which included 396 pages of text: 186 tales, a few songs and song fragments, and various smaller items of prose and verse. These had been obtained from 27 different sources by the narrator, all of whom save one were neighbors (Delargy 1945:11).

Most liked by the folk were the prose narratives related by the *scéalaí* and tales of recent and contemporary historical events in the region, stories of the supernatural in Inis Beag, and personal experiences told by the *seanchai*. Few of the stories dealt with historical occurrences in Ireland between the coming of Christianity and the beginning of the nineteenth century, and none of them concerned personages or happenings associated with the church. At my request, the *seanchai* read three books of Irish folklore that I had brought with me—J. J. Campbell's *Legends of Ireland*, Jeremiah Curtin's *Irish Folk-Tales*, and Eileen O'Faolain's *Irish Sagas and Folk-Tales*—and declared that he had heard all of the stories therein as a youth from his father and other island storytellers. However, the versions in the books often were "incorrect," he claimed, and he delighted in "correcting" them; of course, there are many variants of each tale (as many as 527—Aarne-Thompson type 300 in the archives of the Irish Folklore Commission), and he regarded the Inis Beag stories as the legitimate variants. Most of the local and Irish tales share types (plots) and motifs (incidents, characters, and objects) with those of European and other societies brought about by millennia of diffusion, but the Irish have refashioned these elements in their own corpus according to their culture and personality dispositions.

I will not discuss the various prose narratives told by the *scéalaí* of Inis Beag; the greater number of them can be obtained from Campbell or O'Faolain or Sean O'Sullivan's recent Folktales of Ireland.

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538 539 or Sean O'Sullivan's recent *Folktales of Ireland*. But a further word must be said of the tales recited by the *seanchai*. Popular among local legends are those dealing with such topics as the famine, evictions and other excesses of past landlords, visits to the island by the Black and Tans seeking political refugees, shipwrecks, and tragedies at sea among fishermen. Stories of the supernatural center around the actions of fairies, the pookah and banshee, those with the evil eye, phantom ships, mermaids and sea demons, and material objects possessing human attributes and 538 volitions. These local legends sometimes qualify as anecdotes, and it is humorous 522 anecdotes which the folk refer to as jokes. Outsiders—such as returned Yanks— [177] are responsible for introducing true jokes, but often these are not told and soon are forgotten, especially if they are "dirty jokes." There is no indigenous dirty joking tradition because of sexual puritanism. I have heard men use various verbal devices—innuendos, puns, and asides—that they believed bear sexual connotations; [123] relatively speaking, they are pallid. In the song that I composed, one line of a [832] verse refers to an islander who arose late on the morning of the shipwreck after dreaming perhaps of a beautiful mate;" this is regarded as a highly suggestive phrase, and I have seen it redden cheeks and lower glances in a pub.

538 [221] [178] [521] [561] [562] Storytelling in the past took place mostly between the last week of October and early January, when inclement weather forced a slackening of the fishing regime, and the Christmas season kept people in and near their homes. Nowadays, card playing almost nightly during November and part of December by many of the men has become a substitute activity, which excludes the participation of women and children who once composed a part of the audience addressed by the storyteller. At any one time during this period, several groups met to hear Inis 538 Beag narrators; a *scéalaí* or *seanchai* might be visited by a group and serve as host, 573 or he might be invited into or visit on his own another household, and word of his presence would quickly draw an audience. The session lasted from eight or nine o'clock until midnight, and a tale might be so long that its telling occupied an entire evening, or even two or three consecutive nights. After completing a brief narrative, the storyteller might call on a colleague in the audience to recite a sequel, or the hearers might request that he continue or urge another to contribute a tale.

[857] [562] The average sized audience was composed of a dozen persons, although as many as 20 might attend a session. Small children seldom were allowed in the room unless they were members of the family of the host, nor were women of another household; the children were admonished to sit quietly and not to talk or whisper, and the women knitted or crocheted while listening. Seated in a semi-circle around the hearth, the hearers were faced by the narrator who was seated [574] on the right side of the fireplace, and the wife of the host on the left. Refreshments never were served, but a clay pipe was passed around among the men and very old women. The host furnished pipe and tobacco, and the pipe was passed back to him by each person in turn after being puffed on for several minutes. Only if the story was a long one was the pipe proffered by the host to the narrator from time to time.

538 561 [868] Most storytellers were men past the age of 60 years, but some were between 40 and 60 and a few even younger. An old narrator of reputation often called on a young man to recite in order to give him practice, if he felt that the

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neophyte had the makings of a *scéalaí* or *seanchaí*. When the young storyteller performed publicly, he had to be certain of himself, for if he paused too often or too long or left out portions of the tale, he was ridiculed by the islanders and not called on again. Stories were repeated frequently and enjoyed equally each time by the listeners if told well; sometimes the audience requested a favorite tale, and particular narrators came to be associated with certain stories and always were asked to relate them.

Myths, legends, and folktales told by the *scéalaí* and the long established stories of the *seanchaí* never were embellished but told as accurately as possible. If a narrator attempted to alter such a tale, members of the audience would interrupt and correct him. Stories newly acquired by the folk were modified initially by those who introduced them and by subsequent narrators for a spell, but gradually they became standardized until the point was reached when no one telling them could effect further alterations. The fact that storytellers believed their tales added to the joy of hearing them, for the narrators became deeply involved emotionally in the events that they were describing, and their enthusiasm infected their listeners.

The following were the qualities possessed by a skilled storyteller: he told tales often and derived great pleasure from doing so; he had a musical voice when speaking in either Gaelic or English; he spoke slowly and used few bodily movements; he knew when to pause for effect, especially after a notable incident in the story, which allowed the hearers to picture it in their minds and savor it; his pauses seldom exceeded ten seconds, and he did not cough or interject "bedad," "begob," or "musha" while pausing (an indication that he was trying to recall the next portion of the tale); he looked at each member of the audience in turn, and often stared down at the floor or into the fire for a time; and, he smiled but did not laugh after relating an episode which aroused merriment among his listeners.

When a storyteller was called on, he thought for a spell, head in hands, instead of immediately launching into his tale, even though he probably had made a choice long before. He did not need the urging of the audience or the "courage" afforded by whiskey or stout—which singers and dancers do today—in order to perform. Once started, he never rose from the hob in the hearth, and if he gestured too much in attempting to enact the tale he was laughed at. Interruptions other than corrections were not countenanced; no words of encouragement or praise were uttered as in singing and dancing; and no one dared sleep during a session. The late *scéalaí* carried a short sally rod which he used to prod listeners who appeared to be weary. It is alleged that he once tried to gouge the eyes of a nodding youth with his forked fingers, an incident which often is alluded to when his past performances are recollected.

Contrary to the opinion of nativists, storytellers of the past in Inis Beag were as proficient in English as in Irish, and tales were told in both tongues with equal ease and audience appreciation. The same cannot be said of proverbs, however, for the folk seldom employ them in their English speech. Proverbs figure prominently in the vernacular and are brief and pithy; their adroit use is a mark of erudition and elegance of speech, and they are used in ordinary conversation to

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[537] add color and give point: to guide, to encourage, to praise, to admonish, to reprove, and to implement the art of "indirection" so dear to the Irish. Many are subtle and cannot be understood unless the history and culture of Inis Beag and Ireland
538 are known to the listener. Such a one is, "Come raise the bag on me." This proverb
539 derives from the days of the famine, when maize (corn) was distributed to the poor and hungry; an old woman on the mainland nearby with eight mouths to feed was given a one pound sack, and she asked an official to help her with the "great load." Now it is employed whenever someone receives less than he anticipated. Both tales and proverbs serve enculturative ends by providing models of proper behavior to infants and children. Riddles, told only by the very young, also function in this manner—to sharpen the wits.

Music, Song, and Dance

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[126] Many times I have heard it said on the mainland that the folk of Inis Beag were in the past, and still are, "poor" musicians, singers, and dancers. It is claimed that once there were competent "fiddlers," pipers, tin whistle and flute players, and accordion, concertina, and melodeon players in the island, but during the months that my wife and I lived there, our portable phonograph and two dozen records —along with the accordions of several inexpert musicians, mostly young men trying to master the instrument—provided most of the music for dancing. Music also is produced by lilting, which is known as "mouth music" or "*pus* music" (*pus* being a Gaelic word for mouth). I have witnessed only one man lilt to accompany step dancing, and he for never more than three minutes without pause because of his advanced age; at 73 years, he can lilt while dancing a brief jig himself.

53 The violin is played holding its base in the crook of the elbow, while the forearm is supported on the thigh of the seated musician. The sole fiddler in 1960 was the *seanchaí*, and he could step dance, sing, and recite poetry as well with a
533 high order of excellence for a man of 72 years. Much more difficult to play than
534 its mouth blown counterpart of Scottish fame, the Irish Uilleann bagpipe is played while seated, and its windbag inflated by a bellow manipulated by movements of the upper arm. Since its drone pipes do not dominate the chanter, or melody pipe, the music produced with this bagpipe is more tuneful than that of the Highland instrument: as one islander put it, "The Scottish pipes make you want to charge
[178] into battle, while ours make you want to leap up and dance." Today, the only
[874] pipe music heard in Inis Beag is played during the summer, when occasionally a mainland piper is hired to furnish music to dance to for children attending summer language school. Tin whistle players usually perform on the flute also, since the former instrument is a smaller, vertically played cousin of the latter, somewhat
[184] resembling the recorder. It is extremely common on the mainland, but no longer
[178] played in Inis Beag except infrequently by visitors. Although the accordion and related wind instruments have achieved a new popularity owing to the vogue of
[177] the "*céilí* band," in which they assume a commanding position, they were played widely in the island during the last century after being introduced by lighthouse

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and coast guard personnel. Only four tunes are played by Inis Beag accordionists to accompany dancing.

Instrumentalists, lilters, and singers traditionally performed individually; music was played by a fiddler or flutist and sung by a lilter only to serve solo and figure dancers, and a singer never was joined by others in chorus or accompanied by an instrument. But now the dancers, young and old alike, choose to dance to the lively jigs and reels of the *céilí* band, which plays modern Irish "country dance music." My wife and I discovered that the folk preferred our *céilí* band records for dancing, and were reticent about performing to the music of our many records of fiddling, piping, and flute and tin whistle playing of exceptional quality. On several occasions, we played jazz and classical recordings to groups assembled in our home, to which the islanders listened politely but indifferently. Our *céilí* band records seemed to be quite as acceptable as an accordion at dances and in the pub, and I frequently shared equally with an instrumentalist the time spent in furnishing music for a night long party.

Of the Irish song tradition, Donal O'Sullivan writes: "There is, indeed, a consensus of informed opinion as to its exceeding beauty. . . . In sheer abundance, also, it is probably not surpassed by that of any nation of comparable area and population: for this small and thinly inhabited island has yielded . . . many thousands of melodies of unusual diversity—all of them the anonymous product of the people . . ." (O'Sullivan 1961:5). The Inis Beag folk, as in the case of their music, share but a small portion of this vast body of song. Only a few songs sung publicly by less than a dozen islanders are in Irish, and these are predominantly local compositions. Most of the songs have texts in English and are common to the mainland as well, and of these but a handful are true folk songs—"anonymous product of the people"—rather than broadsides (printed, sold, and memorized) of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Tunes and songs, just as tale types and motifs, of the Irish often are shared with British and Continental neighbors, and it is hard to know their points of origin and paths of diffusion. Some islanders believe that a few of their songs—such as "The Pretty Maid Milking Her Cow"—were obtained by overhearing the fairies at play. Only one composer is active in the vicinity of Inis Beag at the present time; he is a young man from Inis Thiar who excels at composing songs in Irish based on recent events of importance in and near the two islands. A song of his, which describes the incidents arising out of the grounding of the steamer on a sand bar off Inis Thiar several years ago, is one of the most sung ballads in the region.

Singing is a popular pastime in Inis Beag, particularly among men in the pubs, and several islanders of both sexes have outstanding voices by Irish standards. I tape recorded only 38 songs (13 in Gaelic) and found their major themes to be sentimental, patriotic, and humorous—stressing death, unrequited love, emigration and the parting of relatives and friends, conflict in various forms with the English, and lives of the political "martyrs." Love songs, lullabies, humorous songs, religious songs, laments, drinking songs, and songs of occupation (such as ploughing, milking, and spinning) are the major indigenous Irish folk song categories (O'Sullivan 1961:39), but some are absent and others are underrepresented in Inis Beag. Also absent are carols, as well as boat songs like those of the Gaelic speaking Scottish fishermen.

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by the act of complimenting their victims. Other religious retentions found in Inis Beag are a multitude of taboos, divination through the seeking of omens, magical charms and incantations of a protective nature, and an emphasis on "natural" foods, folk medicines, and other products impinging on the human body.

It is believed by many people in Ireland that the Catholicism of the islanders embodies an ideal unattained on the mainland, where the faith is thought to set an example for the world. In fact, the worship of the folk is obsessively oriented toward salvation in the next world, with a corresponding preoccupation with sin in this world; there is a resemblance to polytheism in the manner in which they relate to the Blessed Virgin and Irish saints; Christian as well as pagan rituals and religious artifacts are often employed to serve magical ends; and many beliefs that they hold to be orthodox Catholic are in reality idiosyncratic to Inis Beag or Ireland. Christian morality in its "outward" manifestations is realized to a remarkable degree. This can be attributed, in part, to the emphasis placed on good works as a means of gaining salvation; but, more importantly, it results from the already-mentioned techniques of social control exercised by the clergy, based on an overwhelming fear of damnation.

RESEARCH PROCEDURES

The most active researchers in Inis Beag have been folklorists. Although ethnology as a discipline is not represented in the national universities and elsewhere in the Republic, folklore in the European humanistic tradition is strongly developed. The deliberate recording of the immense body of Irish folklore, folk beliefs, and folk customs began in the early part of the last century, was spurred by nativism—of which the Gaelic Revival was the main strand, and was institutionalized in the Republic with the formation of, first, the Folklore of Ireland Society in 1926, then the Irish Folklore Institute in 1930, and, finally, the Irish Folklore Commission in 1936 (Delargy 1957). For many years, commission collectors have visited Inis Beag, recording mostly the verbal art and material traits—with their associated behavior—of the island folk. They have not attempted to describe and analyze functionally and dynamically the total culture of the island; their visits have been brief and intermit-

114 tent; they have depended on a limited sample of respondents; and most
• 538 of their queries have been guided by Sean O Suilleabhain's *A Handbook of Irish Folklore*, which does not contain numerous categories of significance to anthropologists.

12 My wife and I devoted most of our research to documenting the contemporary culture of Inis Beag: its economic, political, social, religious, esthetic, and recreational aspects. We also described formal and informal education and the personality traits formed by it, reconstructed Inis Beag history of the past century by examining historical materials of many types and probing the memories of aged island respondents, and recorded cultural change in process over an eight-year period. The standard ethnographic research techniques that we employed include guided and open-ended interviews, external and participant observation, collection of life histories, cross-checking, photography, and phonog-
[161] raphy. The sample for much of our data was the total universe of 350 inhabitants.

It is extremely difficult to obtain information in Inis Beag about such matters as amounts and sources of income, disputes, pagan religious retentions and reinterpretations, and sex. This brief list might be increased by at least threefold and gives rise to a consideration of the problems associated with obtaining reliable data from the Irish in general and the
114 islanders in particular. Honor Tracy, in the first chapter (aptly entitled
12 "Forebodings") of her book, *Mind You I've Said Nothing*, humorously
181 presents one of the shortest, yet most discerning analyses of Irish national character yet written by a novelist and predicts the various reactions that her volume will evoke in Irish readers.[4] She concludes with the following remarks about the difficulties surrounding fact finding in Ireland:

> This question of fact was another of the spectres hovering in my path. In every book there should be a fact here and there or the writer is charged
> [521] with aimless frivolity. But facts in Ireland are very peculiar things. They are rarely allowed to spoil the sweep and flow of conversation: the crabbing

[4] These reactions appear to be institutionalized, as my writings and conversational remarks have also evoked them. Two additional responses that I have encountered are: my conclusions are invalidated because I failed to consult certain "source materials" written in Gaelic, and my inferior writing style precludes serious consideration of my findings. I take pains to explain, usually in vain, the many methods of fieldwork utilized by ethnographers to Irish persons who are critical of my data and who invariably use the phrase, "You can't trust what an Irishman tells you." On a rare occasion, one listener to my lengthy explanation said, "Ah, you're cuter than we are"—a compliment indeed!

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cultivate that "sharpness of ear . . . feeling for half-tones and shades and subtleties, and . . . wary alertness" which characterize ethnographic endeavor as an art as well as an epistemology.

The use by the folk of "wings of fancy," "honeyed words," and "obfuscations"—popularly known as "blarney"—reflects a long tradition of verbal skill. It is a vital component of Irish and Inis Beag "charm," which often is a product of a delicately poised set of defense mechanisms; beneath it can lie feelings of inferiority and dislike, envy, and jealousy of others. Blarney can very effectively serve to shield genuine thoughts and feelings and thus protect the ego. Irish folklore and literature also reflect this tradition of verbal skill, and it is probably expressed most formidably in James Joyce's *Ulysses* and *Finnegan's Wake*. (At least one folklorist has collected "Joycean utterances" from Irish peasants.)

Most of our information came from observation and unguided interviews. It proved impossible to take field notes openly, except when collecting innocuous data—such as the number of livestock owned by each householder—from a few particular persons. Thus, we were forced to limit our visits to less than two hours, after which we immediately transcribed what our combined memories could resuscitate. Despite frequent explanations of our presence in Inis Beag, which were candid and truthful, it was thought by the islanders that I was interested only in archeological sites and oral literature, and that my wife was not a trained and experienced co-worker; this, obviously, reflects their previous experiences with scientists and their conception of the position of women in society. Their inability to evaluate adequately our intentions proved to be a research boon. For once "accepted" (a relative term, since no outsider is ever accepted) after many months in the island, we were allowed to listen to and participate in conversations and activities from which we would otherwise have been excluded.

Our data on sex came from my involvement as a participant-observer in personal and often intimate conversations with men and my wife's counseling of women who were bothered by such matters as explaining and coping with menstruation, menopause, mental illness, the sexual curiosity of their children, and "excessive" sexual demands of their spouses. Our sexual knowledge and sympathy coupled with their needs and inquisitiveness gave rise to a "counselor-client" relationship between many of the folk and ourselves. They came to speak freely, albeit indirectly at times, with each of us about this sphere of behavior which arouses so much anxiety and fear. I must mention that the relationship